

**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**

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Contact:

Steve Bieda 517-373-1772

Carmella Sabaugh 586-469-7939

**PEOPLE NOT QUALIFIED FOR JURY DUTY  
SHOULD NOT BE SENT JUROR QUESTIONNAIRES  
SAY STATE REP AND COUNTY CLERK**

Taxpayers should not pay to mail juror qualification questionnaires to people who are not permitted by law to serve on a jury said State Representative Steve Bieda (D-Warren) and Macomb County Clerk / Register of Deeds Carmella Sabaugh in support of a bill introduced by Bieda in the Michigan House of Representatives.

“It just makes common sense not to spend taxpayers money trying to qualify a person for jury duty when we already know felons are not allowed to serve on jury duty,” said Bieda. “In a time of federal and state budget shortfalls, this is a common sense way to save a little money.”

“This is a way to save taxpayers money and make the jury selection process more efficient,” said Sabaugh. “I asked Representative Bieda to introduce this bill because of his record of common sense solutions for Macomb County residents and his reputation as someone who gets things done.”

House Bill 6285 would give the jury commission, with approval of the county’s chief judge, the discretion to say juror qualification questionnaires need not to be mailed to felons. Michigan law states felons cannot serve on a jury. The law already states that to qualify as a juror a person shall:

- (a) Be a citizen of the United States, 18 years of age or older, and a resident in the county for which the person is selected.
- (b) Be able to communicate in the English language.
- (c) Be physically and mentally able to carry out the functions of a juror.
- (d) Not have served as a juror in a court during the preceding 12 months.
- (e) Not have been convicted of a felony.

A person more than 70 years of age may claim exemption from jury service.

To select jurors, the Secretary of State provides a list of potential jurors to the county clerk every year from the drivers' license and Michigan identification card computer database. The clerk then sends questionnaires to a random sample from that list. Based on answers to the questionnaires, people qualified for jury duty may then be randomly summoned for actual jury service.

The Michigan Department of State Police keeps a database of felons. Last spring Sabaugh worked with the state police on a pilot program to test the process of cross-checking the Secretary of State's database with the state police database to exclude known felons from the jury pool. The pilot program was done at no additional cost to taxpayers. Sabaugh determined that at least 15,000 Macomb County names would have been removed from the county's master jury pool list of over 600,000 names that her office received last spring from the Secretary of State.

"Since the state had the database of potential jurors and the database of felons who cannot serve on jury duty, it just made sense to link the two databases to save taxpayers some money," said Sabaugh.

Removing the names of people the state already knows cannot serve on jury duty could reduce juror qualification questionnaire and summons printing costs, processing costs and mailing costs for counties across the state. Doing so would also make the jury selection process even more accurate.

"There would definitely be savings to Macomb County taxpayers," said Bieda. "When you consider that this procedure could be duplicated in every county in Michigan, it could add up to big savings state wide."

Bieda's bill does not impose a mandate on counties. It lets each county chief judge decide whether or not to change their juror process. The bill also has nothing to do with the issue of whether or not felons should be permitted to serve on a jury. Many people believe that a felon who paid his or her debt to society should be permitted to serve. Some also feel that if a person is being tried on a felony charge by a jury of his peers, then former felons would certainly be among the "peers." Bieda's bill simply states that as long as felons are not allowed to serve on a jury, then counties should be able to refrain from sending qualification questionnaires to them.

Editor's note: A photo of State Rep. Steve Bieda and Macomb County Clerk / Carmella Sabaugh in the county jury room holding juror badges is available for your use on the county clerk's web site <http://www.macombcountymi.gov/clerksoffice>. Click the NEWS button.